

in one of the Panegyrists, who said that Constantine had bestowed lustre upon Britain "*illic ori-undo*" But the words are now taken as referring to his accession and not to his birth. He was certainly proclaimed Emperor in Britain, and might thus be said to have "sprung thence." Constantine's birthplace seems to have been either Naissus, a city in Upper Moesia, or Drepanum, a city near Nicomedia. The balance of evidence, though none of it is very trustworthy, inclines to the former.

His father was Constantius Chlorus, afterwards Caesar and Augustus, but at the time of Constantine's birth merely a promising officer in the Roman army. Constantius belonged to one of the leading families of Moesia and his mother was a niece of the capable and soldierly Claudio, the conqueror of the Goths. Claudio had only been dead four years when Constantine was born, and we may suppose that it was his influence which had set Constantius in the way of rapid promotion. He had formed one of those secondary marriages which were recognised by Roman law, when the wife was not of the same social standing as the husband. Helena is said to have been the daughter of an innkeeper of Drepanum, and Constantine's enemies lost no opportunity of dwelling upon the obscurity of his ancestry upon his mother's side. But that he was born in wedlock is beyond question. Had the relationship between Constantius and Helena been an irregular one, there would have been no need for Maximian to insist on a divorce when he ratified Constantius's elevation to the purple by giving him the hand of his daughter, Theodora.